

Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN)



Mission Statement:

LIEN aims to ensure that all Ontarians have access to adequate, affordable energy as a basic necessity while minimizing the environmental impacts of energy generation and distribution.

LIEN promotes programs and policies that address energy poverty and homelessness, reduce Ontario's contribution to smog and climate change, and promote energy conservation and a healthy economy. These programs and policies must prioritize the more efficient use of energy, a transition to renewable sources of energy, and consumer education and protection.

Our vision is an Ontario where everyone has equitable access to conservation and financial assistance programs and services to meet their basic energy needs affordably and sustainably.

Background

LIEN was formed in 2004 by anti-poverty, affordable housing and environmental groups in response to the impact of rising energy prices on low-income Ontarians. LIEN has over 70 members from a broad range of environmental, legal, tenant, affordable housing, and social service organizations across Ontario that have endorsed our mandate. LIEN is directed by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from across the province.

We seek to raise awareness of, and propose solutions to, energy poverty through:

- Outreach to community groups to involve them in LIEN;
- Outreach to the public, e.g. through the media;
- Participating in OEB hearings and legislative processes;
- Working with policy-makers and local utilities.

Advocacy

LIEN's advocacy activities have resulted in:

- The development of the **Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)**, which includes emergency financial assistance and low-income customer service rules, designed to help low-income Ontarians better manage their electricity and natural gas bills.
- The establishment of the **Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP)**, which provides a monthly credit to low-income customers based on household income and household size.

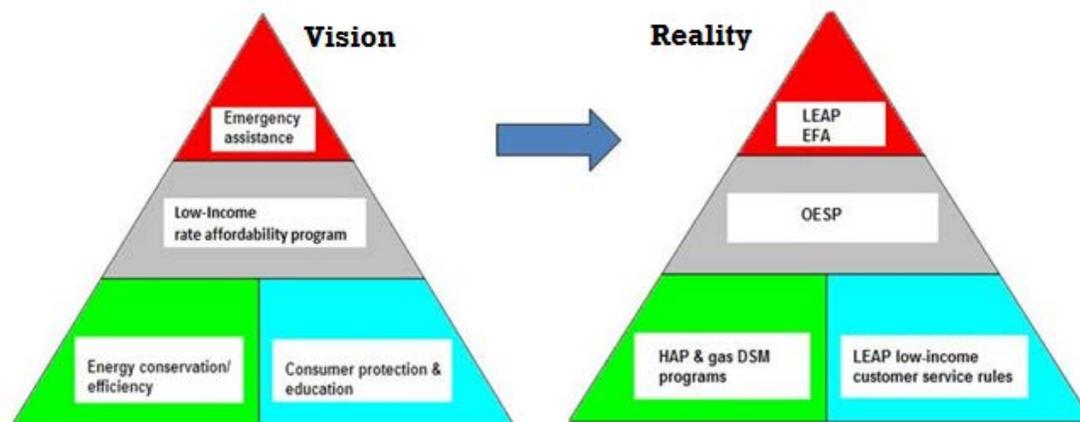
LIEN continues to participate on the OEB's Financial Assistance Working Group (FAWG) to address ongoing delivery and implementation issues associated with the roll-out of the LEAP initiatives and the OESP.

- The development of the **saveONenergy HOME ASSISTANCE Program (HAP)**, which provides eligible low-income homeowners and tenants with free energy upgrades in their home, thereby helping them reduce their energy bills. HAP is funded through, and centrally delivered by, the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO).

- The development of the Enbridge **Home Winterproofing Program** and Union Gas **Home Weatherization Program**, which provide eligible low-income participants with a free home energy assessment and weatherization upgrades, at no cost, to lower energy bills, improve energy efficiency and make the home more comfortable.
- The announcement of the Ontario **Fair Hydro Plan**, which includes the increase of OESP credits by 50% and the enhancement of the Rural or Remote Electricity Rate Protection (RRRP) program. The plan also includes an **Affordability Fund** that will assist electricity customers who do not qualify for low-income conservation programs, such as HAP, but are unable to undertake energy efficiency improvements without financial assistance.
- LIEN has hosted ten annual conferences, the most recent on May 17, 2017 with financial support from Legal Aid Ontario. The conference, entitled **“Shedding Light on Ontario’s Energy Sector”**, involved over 50 participants representing a range of organizations from the anti-poverty, affordable housing and environmental communities, as well as representatives from local utilities, the Ministry of Energy, and the Ontario Energy Board (OEB).

LIEN’s Low-Income Energy Conservation and Assistance Strategy

LIEN’s strategy to address energy poverty involves a province-wide, comprehensive approach to low-income energy conservation and assistance. It places the greatest emphasis and resources on long-term, environmentally sustainable measures to reduce energy consumption and costs for low-income households. As a result of LIEN’s advocacy work over the years, Ontario now has a comprehensive energy poverty strategy in place.



The base of the pyramid:

- Targeted low-income energy conservation/efficiency programs, at no-cost to participants and with as extensive measures as practicable to provide deep reductions in energy use
- Customer service rules that provide security deposit exemptions, waiver of late payment fees, affordable arrears repayment terms
- Extensive consumer education about energy conservation and the available programs to support conservation activities

The middle of the pyramid:

- Low-income energy rate affordability program – it ensures ongoing affordability of energy bills and serves to prevent energy crises rather than just react to them after they have occurred.

The top of the pyramid:

- Adequately funded emergency financial assistance to help low-income households in crisis

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For information on, and to download, LIEN publications and media releases, please visit www.lowincomeenergy.ca or contact the LIEN Coordinator at tel. (416) 597-5855 ext. 5167; fax (416) 597-5821; or by email at info@lowincomeenergy.ca

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